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Monte Carlo's famous Casino

The son of Britain's Prime Minister tells the fabulous
story of the multimillionaire who is called . . .

MR. MONTE CARLO

CPYRGHT

I got to know that fascinating personality, Aristotle Socrates Onassis, in Monte Carlo, the headquarters of his vast international organization. He is a member of the new and fabulously rich generation of Greek shipowners who seem to have a golden touch in making and spending money.

Onassis is a small, swarthy man of 48. His black hair is streaked with gray and his dark eyes are usually hooded behind thick-lensed, tortoise-shell spectacles. An acute and intelligent Frenchwoman recently described him as looking like the black knight on a chessboard with his dark skin, curved nose and blinkered eyes. Like the knight at chess, he is given to sudden shifts of mood and emphasis—two steps forward and one step sideways.

His most characteristic stance is with shoulders slightly hunched, arms spread out, and his feet like a bantamweight, watching which way his opponent is going to move. He not only has prudently avoided putting all his eggs in one basket, he also has domiciled the geese which lay his golden eggs in a dozen different countries.

The most valuable part of his whaling fleet has been seized by the government of Peru. The United States government is suing him for nearly \$20,000,000, the working profits of the war surplus ships which, they allege, he fraudulently bought at a knock-down price by pretending to be an American-owned company. And a man called Spyridon Catapodis is suing him for the commission he alleges Onassis has not paid for Catapodis's help in negotiating a deal with Saudi Arabia.

Even if Onassis lost all these suits, even if his whaling ships had not been insured for \$14,000,000 against confiscation, he would remain a very

rich man. There would still be his prosperous tobacco business in the Argentine. There would still be Monte Carlo, of which he owns the majority of shares. There would still be the million tons of tankers and freighters. There would still be the ready cash in the banks of Switzerland. Even if he were stripped down to his 1,800-ton yacht *Christina*, he would still have a luxurious deck over his head.

The *Christina* was built as a destroyer escort in Montreal in 1943. It was refitted as a yacht in Kiel and the captain and crew are German. It is insured with Lloyds of London. It sails under the single star and stripes of Liberia.

Onassis possesses the dual citizenship of Greece and the Argentine. And his little, dark-haired daughter Christina (after whom the yacht is named) is Greek in blood, like her blond mother Tina and also, like her mother, an American citizen.

Onassis keeps his yacht in ocean-going trim. Its crew of 44 are the pick of the thousand German sailors in the Onassis whaling fleet. The latest British radar equipment and high-precision navigation gear are installed.

The *Christina* was fitted out as a luxurious home for the Onassis family. His son, Alexander, is six and his daughter, Christina, four. The yacht has a children's playroom furnished with miniature bright yellow tables and chairs.

On the stern deck is a dance floor which can be converted in 50 seconds into a mosaic-lined swimming pool, nine feet deep, aerated with cascades and illuminated by colored underwater lights.

The owner's bedroom is only slightly more magnificent than the 13 others for his guests. On the

dressing table are gold-framed ikons of the Greek Orthodox Church. His kidney-shaped sunken bath has a pattern of fishes and sea shells. The yacht is air conditioned and centrally heated.

Beneath the glass top of the semicircular bar is a blue strip of metal representing the sea. On this, model ships are continually moved by magnets. Among these ships is a tiny basket which flies a flag inscribed, "Moses—the first ship owner."

The *Christina* has a top speed of 22 knots. As well as lifeboats, she has stowed on her upper deck a motorboat capable of 60 m.p.h., and a six-ton sailing boat, complete with wireless and refrigerator in its small cabin. Between these two boats there is an Italian amphibian aeroplane capable of 200 m.p.h. and with a range of 1,200 miles. In it, Onassis and three of his staff can fly direct from Monte Carlo to London or Hamburg.

Two years ago Onassis intrigued the world and became, for the first time, a familiar name to newspaper readers in a dozen countries when he bought what amounts to a controlling interest in the Societe des Bains de Mer. This company owns the Monte Carlo Casino, the Hotel de Paris, the Cafe de Paris, the Hermitage Hotel, the Beach Hotel, the New Beach Hotel, the Monte Carlo Theater, the golf course at Montagel and much other property.

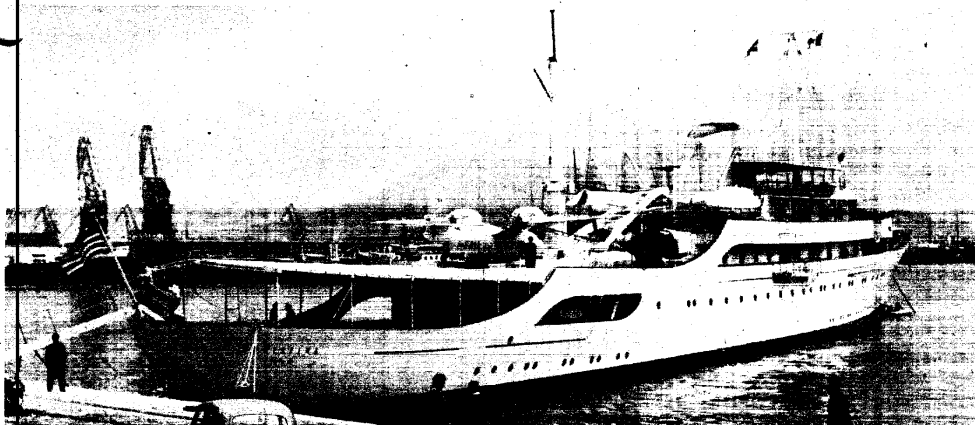
In his few spare moments from directing his world-wide shipping empire, Onassis has all sorts of plans for Monte Carlo. It takes 25 minutes by the winding mountain road to drive from Monte Carlo to the Montagel golf course. Onassis is toying with the idea of installing an aerial railway, at a cost of about \$400,000, which would enable visitors to Monte Carlo to reach the golf course in six minutes. This would not be economic if used only by golfers and if Onassis decides to build the railway he will also have to build a restaurant, a swimming pool, tennis courts, etc., at Montagel.

The Casino gambling today is on a trivial scale compared with what it was before World War I. If Monte Carlo is to thrive, other attractions will have to be provided. One which would be sure to make money is a racetrack, but there is no flat ground for the purpose.

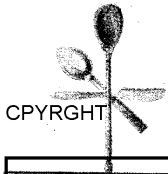
Onassis has suggested that this difficulty could easily be solved. "Why not drain the port and turn it into a racetrack?" he asks. "We could always build a new port across the bay."

The double citizenship of Onassis, the use he makes of the flags of Panama, Honduras, Costa Rica, Liberia and Saudi Arabia, the separate companies

Onassis's fabulous yacht *Christina* is a floating office and home for him and his family. It has a crew of 44.

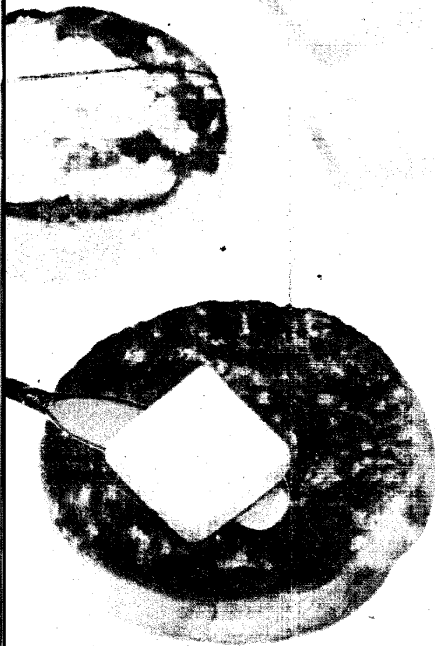


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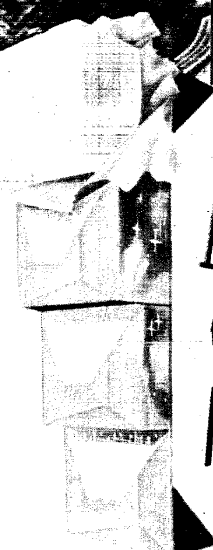
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BY RANDOLPH CHURCHILL

Well-known British writer on world affairs

and offices he maintains in Buenos Aires, New York, London, Hamburg, Kiel and Monte Carlo undoubtedly have their conveniences. Not the least of these is the minimum of taxation for his world-wide activities.

The first of the three international disputes in which Onassis is now involved is with the United States.

After World War II he acquired surplus tankers and freighters from the U. S. government for \$18,000,000. At that time the United States laws prohibited the sale of surplus ships to non-Americans and in October, 1953, the U. S. government charged Onassis with conspiracy to defraud. The ships were bought by American-owned companies but the U. S. is contending that these were dummy fronts for Onassis.

Onassis's second international rum-pus is of a far more complicated and important character. In January, 1954, he made a deal with the government of Saudi Arabia by which he is obliged to carry 10 per cent of all Saudi Arabian oil, and has the right to ship up to 80 per cent. In return, Onassis has agreed to pay the Saudi Arabian Government one shilling, sixpence a ton on the oil he carries and to carry 50,000 tons free to Saudi Arabian ports.

This contract has led to a howl of protest from both shipping and oil companies who have denounced it as being contrary to normal commercial practice. The powerful interests who have been affronted have put pressure on the British and U. S. governments.

Onassis says a good deal of the agitation is "humbug" and that he has "documentary proof that some of the interests who are now screaming the loudest tried for many months to secure a precisely similar contract." Still, he is disturbed that his actions should have come under the censure of the British government. Like so many Greeks, particularly those who have maritime interests, he has always had a respectful, yet romantic, conception of all that England stands for.

The arrest of his whaling ships on the high seas brings to the boil a third international dispute which has been simmering for some time. Two years ago, the governments of Ecuador, Peru and Chile agreed to set up a permanent commission to exploit and conserve the maritime resources of the South Pacific.

They claimed that their territorial waters extended from three miles to 200 miles from their coasts. Onassis is the first whaling-fleet owner to defy the legality of this.

Onassis went into the whaling business in 1950 and his fleet is one of the most modern in existence. It cost him about \$17,000,000 to acquire and equip his fleet. The expenses of a season's whaling are more than \$1,000,000, the

average net profit \$800,000 to \$1,500,000. In his first whaling season, however, Onassis had beginner's luck. He cleared nearly \$8,500,000.

Onassis was born in Smyrna in 1907. He came of a family which had lived in Asia Minor for three or four generations and his father was one of the richest Greek merchants in Smyrna.

When the Turks counterattacked in 1922 and threw the Greek army into the sea, Onassis, his sisters, his father and his mother were in deadly danger. His father's three brothers were hanged in Smyrna by the Turks in a public square before the eyes of their young nephew. He and his father spent months in prison before they got away to Greece.

His conversation is always racy. Though his choice of words in English



Mrs. Tina Onassis—Daughter of one Greek shipowner, wed to another, she's an American citizen.

is sometimes slightly off-center, his sense of the balance of a spoken sentence is uncannily acute. He is a born orator with a poetic sense and can build up a list of adjectives in ascending order of emphasis and weight, which are as perfect as a phrase of music.

Just as his listener is caught by the spell, he will suddenly bring the whole edifice tumbling down by a deliberate piece of comic pathos. He will burst into laughter at the very moment when almost any other man would be exploding into passion. Sometimes he changes from a gentle whisper to a deafening bellow between two words.

Describing an interview with some commercial rivals, he will say:

"I said to them (*very quietly and slowly*): 'Gentlemen, (*very loudly*) you sons-of-bachelors, you are trying to ruin me.'"

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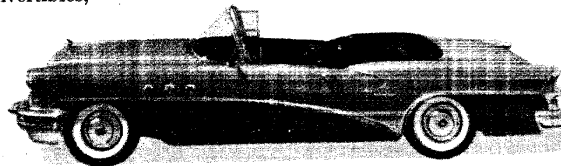
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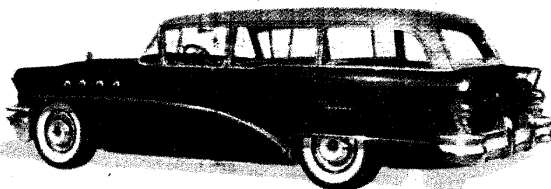
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